

IMPRESSIONS & REFLECTIONS 2

Outcome of a Visit and Dinner at the MIT Stella Room (7-338)

on September 28, 2011 as part of the

RCC/MIT SPURS-Humphrey Collaboration

by Program Participants from Roxbury Community College

Edited by: Jose A. Alicea, Ed. D.

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The following short literary pieces by students, faculty and staff members from Roxbury Community College (RCC) result from a visit and dinner at the MIT Stella Room on September 28, 2011 as part of the RCC/MIT SPURS-Humphrey Collaboration.

RCC/MIT-SPURS Collaboration

Mission:

To collaborate in a joint program to benefit students, faculty, fellows and scholars of RCC and MIT within the context of the city /regional planning disciplines.

Goals:

1. To expose RCC honor students to the international/global perspective within their RCC major through meaningful interactions with the SPURS/Humphrey Fellows.
 - RCC's ethnically and culturally diverse Honors students gain insight into the work of the SPURS/Humphrey Fellows by participating in key lectures, field trips, and social engagements that would support their academic and professional pursuits at RCC.
2. To expose the SPURS/Humphrey Fellows to RCC honor students' and their diverse experiences as American and international students within the American higher education system.
 - SPURS/Humphrey Fellows participate in key Honors classroom activities as guest speakers, offer college-wide lectures, as well as provide mentorship in RCC Honors projects related to their field of study. The Fellows can utilize RCC students and faculty as resources when exploring themes related to American planning.
3. To engender an educational environment that attempts to bridge the gap between community colleges and 4-yr. undergraduate/graduate institutions in order to view each other as resources that could further their academic initiatives.

IMPRESSIONS & REFL3CTIONS 2

Contributing Writers - Students

Saleh Abbas
Share-Leigh Arneaud-Bernard
Miguel Baquerizo
Renee Keyes
Ardo Mohamed
Maxwell Opara

Contributing Writers – Faculty and Staff

Jose A. Alicea, Ed. D.
Randy Foote
Irina Galatskaya
Rhonda Gray
Nasreen Latif
Robert P. Stevens

Impressions: Saleh Abbas

The first and most crucial step towards learning is listening. This is precisely what I experienced at the SPURS-MIT meeting which opened up an exceptional opportunity to exchange thoughts with people from diverse cultures.

A key point of the conference dealt with the importance of Urban Planning. The Fellows articulated not only their concerns and aspirations towards their countries, but projected resolutions. These resolutions came from people that have personally seen and felt the hardships in their respective countries; therefore they are powered by a passion to make a change for the good, and a fire that fights to extinguish the inequality that molests their societies.

This proves that we have a lot to learn from these fellows, and conversely, they have a lot to learn about us. That said, I believe that this cultural assembly should converse more often, and benefit from each other's thoughts because we have a lot to learn, and we're definitely ready to listen.

Share-Leigh Arneaud-Bernard

SPURS-MIT/RCC meeting Impressions and Refl3ctions paper due date is here!

My Reflection/Impressions: (response): The RCC/MIT Fellows project held on Wednesday 28th September was a project that opened new doors for me. I learned many interesting things especially about urban planning, which due to my major, I had no clue as to the processes behind it. Since I am a Science major it made me realize that there are other fields and programs available to me that I can also take to broaden my educational horizons and to probably think of a way to use both fields of study to better my community and even my home country, Trinidad and Tobago when I get older. This opportunity also allowed me to create new friendships and partnerships with international students who share the same ideas and concepts that I had. Thank you much for granting me the opportunity of being part of this wonderful project.

Miguel Baquerizo: MIT-Spurs Urban Meeting

At the MIT-Spurs Urban Meeting I met Felipe Sandoval, a very energetic gentleman. He explained to me the reason he decided to go back to school and join MIT, which was that he wanted to better himself and help his community improve and move away from the “copy and paste mentality” that the government seemed to have adopted for policy.

He also explained the complexity of his job in his community and how he had to advocate for the people living there. Felipe kept in mind his commitment to his job working for the “municipalidad”, which meant sometimes that he had to strategically omit some information from the people that he represented. He explained how in his position working for the municipalidad he had already hit a glass ceiling and how he was more interested in planning instead of advocating even though it is tightly related. It was very

inspiring for me to see someone from South America like me seeking similar goals of self-improvement (get a better education) in order to serve his community better.

**Renee Keyes
RCC/ MIT Fellows Project**

The best part of participating in the RCC/MIT Fellows project was being able to have one on one time to talk about the RCC's garden project. It was very nice to have someone interested in what we're trying to do to improve Roxbury Community College by improving its garden. I am very excited and I can't wait until they can come for a tour to see how we have worked together as a college community to improve our school.

Ms. Ardo Mohamed
I hope this is good enough.....:)

On the night of the Sept 28th dinner meeting at MIT

Room full of decisive people from all over
exchange intelligence, only intensify the energy level
To me it was all personal, my day-to-day yearning
mute sitting in the back, yet everyone read my mind
Future possibilities are tangible
Most of all I don't have to be alone in my dream
My expectation out of all this is infinity

After, getting together with one of the "SPURS"
It was enlightening to explore together the City of Boston and its history
Light discussion on different City Plans
Learning from different perspective
Could only be an inspiring treat
that I look forward to, again and again

My expectation out of all this is infinity
What an honor to be part of the plan in action between RCC and MIT.

Maxwell Opara

I really enjoyed last week's dinner/gathering with the SPURS and Fellows. I am considering urban planning myself; the ability to construct communities from nothing to something is life changing.

I just have one question: What is the single most important institution within a community when it comes to urban planning?

Jose A. Alicea, Ed. D.
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
RCC/MIT Fellows Program Coordinator
Roxbury Community College

The relationship between RCC and MIT seems like a mismatch: an internationally acclaimed elite university partnered with a community college. The relationships among MIT's PURS Fellows and RCC students can also slip into asymmetrical mismatches: on one hand, the MIT SPURS Fellows are graduate professionals, working internationally in the regional planning field, while on the other hand, RCC students have not achieved their Associate Degrees; they know little about the planning profession and are basically exploring their options for further education.

It is important that we work together to ensure that all benefit from what could be an unworkable relationship by looking at it from the students' perspectives. What are their wants and needs? How can they best benefit from this experience? What concepts, events and explorations would make for an exciting and rewarding educational experience? How can we make that happen?

Randy Foote
Adjunct Professor Social Sciences
Reflections and Impressions MIT SPURS Dinner and Discussion

The evening was an excellent beginning to our first full year of this MIT/RCC collaboration. Bish brought together a wonderful group of MIT faculty who had expertise – both academic and political -- in the kind of urban issues that directly affect RCC and our students. This is an important factor in what each side of this partnership has to offer the other in our collaboration.

Bish was correct in noting that there is much that the SPURS International Fellows could learn from RCC, particularly from the community involvement and protests that stopped the Southwest Corridor highway and that directly led to the creation of RCC. I look forward to all of us attending and participating in the November event discussing this.

Any opportunities that our students could have in participating in MIT programs would be excellent. Specifically, Bish and Chris Jones have offered to develop paid internships for RCC students at MIT over the summer. I look forward to helping to make this take shape and to seeing what other opportunities might arise.

Our RCC team needs to follow up on the request from the SPURS Fellows for a visit to see RCC and the Roxbury neighborhood to enable them to get a larger sense of our urban environment, as mandated by the Federal grant for the SPURS program.

At the heart of this collaboration, I believe, are the relationships that can form between RCC faculty and students and MIT faculty and fellows. It seemed that the breakout after dinner when our students engaged with the fellows was a good start. Similarly, the willingness of MIT faculty to speak at RCC can be very positive. I have been talking with Xav Briggs about speaking at RCC, specifically about government policy as it relates (for better and for worse) to inequality in the inner city, especially as regards

education. Xav has the kind of governmental experience from which RCC students and faculty alike could benefit.

I noted our students' particular concern with how urban planning and community organizing could help their communities. I would like them to have an opportunity to learn more about this, knowledge that will enable them to give back to their neighborhoods. RCC students are among the most talented and dedicated young people who have come out of the local school system, and they are the future of our community. Correspondingly, I look forward to opportunities for RCC faculty to participate in professional development with MIT, in whatever ways that are most practical.

My thanks to all the participants in this program, and I hope that we can build well upon this opening event. RCC and MIT are at different poles of the academic (and financial) spectrum, but we are equally obliged and dedicated to serving our larger communities, both local and international.

Best regards

**Irina Galatskaya
RCC, Student Success-Career Development
Reflections on the September 28, 2011 meeting at MIT**

Roxbury Community College is committed to providing quality innovative educational programs that strengthen community and workforce partnerships, promote diversity and cultural exchange, inspire lifelong learning, and prepare students for successful careers, college/university transfer, and meaningful civic participation.

The Humphrey Fellows Program at MIT affords a rich galaxy of opportunities to the students and faculty at Roxbury Community College. Specifically, the Humphrey initiative in Urban Planning brings home a galaxy of challenges and potential solutions to inspire and energize our students- virtually all of whom have grown up in the urban sphere of Greater Boston.

As RCC students consider the array of career options open to them, urban planning as an area of expertise is a new and eye-opening career path. It is an area that at present is not a top-of-mind destination for them. With their wealth of life-experience in the urban world, our students can additionally bring their academic accomplishment to a ripe and burgeoning career opportunity.

As planners continue to be in high demand throughout North America, I hope the RCC/MIT partnership will be instrumental in encouraging a wide range of our students to consider rewarding and challenging careers in planning in the area of public health, nursing, criminal justice, elementary and secondary education, human services, law, English, art, history, biology or chemistry and engineering.

Rhonda Gray
Reflections

It was very exciting to meet the 2011-2012 SPURS/Humphrey Fellows as well as some of the DUSP faculty members; all participants offered rich and diverse perspectives on the topic of Urban Planning. RCC communicated a clear commitment to the partnership through our growing representation of students and faculty (Irina Galatskaya is a new participant) as well as the evolving content-based bridge that links both institutions; Prof. Latif's Honors Colloquium and Garden Club initiatives as well as my Comp I curriculum that examines literary discussions of the urban landscape. In order to strengthen this partnership, one DUSP faculty member said, the faculty must be invested in it. With this in mind, I'd like to see a growing faculty exchange occur that can be pursued in many ways. The following are some suggestions for faculty engagement:

- Attend lectures at MIT/RCC
- RCC faculty facilitate workshops/lectures for Fellows and DUSP faculty based on our discipline
- RCC faculty/DUSP faculty co-facilitate workshops for Fellows
- Attend an event "off campus" that creates natural opportunities for all to share ideas/bond

In a nutshell, I'd like to have more professional development components built into the partnership. This would be a key step in creating the pathway for our students to be academically empowered by the collaboration; both institutions would be able to fluently speak a common language if faculty became aware of each other's skills and expertise.

Nasreen Latif
Professor
Social Sciences and Management Science Department

Excellent networking opportunity!

In this meeting, I saw more interest among SPURS Program fellows to visit and speak to our classes at RCC about their work and research in their home countries. Currently, Mr. Amjad Ali Awan from Pakistan is interested in coming in for my Urban Economics class.

For me, I can see connections between Urban Economics, Environmental Issues/Program (in progress), the RCC Garden Service Learning project and SPURS program.

Here is our Garden Service Learning Project Mission Statement:

The mission of the Roxbury Community College Garden project is to improve community health, strengthen the local economy, and protect the environment by fostering partnerships among community, administration, faculty, students, local businesses and leaders to turn the yard into a community supported agriculture garden/farm with a measurable positive impact.

Robert P. Stevens
Adjunct Professor, Photography and Entrepreneurship

Echoing earlier meetings between the two institutions, last week's gathering was about good food, camaraderie, and lively discussion about the collaboration's design. The round table introductions and ideas-exchange revealed a desire to parley the talking points into a concrete program with benefits for both schools.

One major idea creates an exchange between the two schools, whereby Humphrey Fellows, and MIT faculty, visit RCC to directly observe the RCC culture and participate in discussions/seminars addressing areas of interest to the fellows.

In a similar vein, RCC faculty and students travel to MIT to participate in exercises there. An RCC-to-MIT degree program track, for RCC students, has some currency.

I think more can be made of the parallels between MIT's SPURS program, under which planners from foreign countries spend a sabbatical year at MIT, and RCC's diversified Associates Degree programs where approximately thirty percent of the student population is foreign-born. It seems both schools are "doing business" with people from outside the US who seek insight into an American way. Can educational programming, i.e. educational exchanges, at each school be designed to serve the needs of these two not-dissimilar groups?

One last reflection: in my role as photography instructor at RCC I seek to expand teaching methods and techniques for my students. I would appreciate the opportunity to visit MIT's famed Media Lab, to see what is available there for MIT students.